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THE

BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. 24.] JULY 31, 1810. [Vol. 5.

COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

THE REJOINDER OF S. E.

"What a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one, that is neither known of thee, nor knows thee?"

SHAKSPEARE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE two last numbers of your Magazine have favoured me with a tolerably ample portion of crimination. Your known regard to justice will readily allow the accused to be heard in his own defence.

In my letter to a Student at college no name is mentioned, no individual is indentified. A portion of its contents is applied to a Mr. M'Henry, styled the Bard of Erin, by a writer who signs himself T, and by an Irish Student. These gentlemen, then, construct my language into personal allusion, while itself contains no personalities. I acknowledge there are two sentences in my letter which will *now* appear applicable to the Bard of Erin, not owing to their own contents, but to the interpretation put upon them by the advocates of the Poet. The sentences are, "it is not easy to see what the Bard you mention gains by endeavouring to add to his stature, and at so much expense too, unless he expects the more successfully to recommend himself to some of those fair angels who set a high value on appearances. I should have imagined his Bardship would rather have been proud of resembling the crooked and dwarfish figure of Pope." To Mr. M'Henry I do hereby express my sorrow, that any thing said by me, should have given occasion to his two professed friends *inadvertently* to expose his bodily infirmities. From these two sentences it is impossible for sophistry itself to extract any reflection upon the *mind* of the poet. No publication of his, at the time of writing the letter, had I so much as seen. To no production of that gentleman have I made the least allusion. That I have at all pointed a single expression against his writings cannot be proved or inferred from any language of my letter. Therefore I am justified in asserting that the Irish Student has illogically charged me with making an attack upon the compositions of the Bard of Erin. My Correspondent had mentioned some person from Ireland (not Mr. M'Henry) who was unsuccessfully attempting to publish poems by subscription. Without alluding to this person or any other, with no intention to give offence, the mere circumstance of unsuccessfulness in thus becoming an author, gave occasion to all that has been said as to publishing by subscription, as also to my observations respecting inferior Poets. That Pope, Burns, or others of distinguished celebrity have, of necessity, for emolument, or in compliance with the earnest solicitation of learned friends published by subscription, furnishes no tenable ground for animadversion upon what I have written. If by the merited and unsolicited patronage of subscription, the world have been privileged with some of the most famous works, they have also been imposed on by the most paltry performances, introduced to the public view through the aid of a list of subscribers, who were procured by the specious hand bills and the assiduous canvass of the conceited scribbler.

That some Poets are inferior to others, that some, who assume that name, are beneath criticism, that of such as are inferior, some may improve, and others never become

eminent is the sum of all I have said. If herein I have fairly procured the blame of indiscriminate censure, let the candid reader judge. General censure, where no name is mentioned, may be improven by all to whom it applies, without wounding the feelings of any individual before the public. General criticism founded in truth is right, as well as particular praise or blame. If my remarks are applicable to no modern productions, let them meet with that contempt which they deserve: but they are not condemnable if some rhymers merit whatever blame they may be fairly supposed to contain. Dryden, in the poem entitled Mac-Flecknoe, says,

"Shadwell alone, of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity;
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Why are these lines reprehensible? Because an individual is ill-naturedly named, and principally because they are not true. Precisely to mark a writer, to make no quotations from his compositions illustrative of his mistakes, to point out no particular defects with which he is chargeable, and yet indulge groundless and indiscriminate censure on both the man and his writing is improper. How far I am guilty of this impropriety, and how far the Irish Student is chargeable therewith in his answer to my letter, let reason and candour determine. A section of my epistle he calls an unfounded, ill-conceived, and ill-expressed invective: but wherein it is so is not stated. He charges me either directly or obliquely with ignorance, stupidity, misrepresentation, gross mistatement, illiberal abuse, indelicacy, scurrility, want of feeling, want of breeding, insult and moral depravity. I would beg leave to ask this gentleman, in a quotation from himself, does he conceive the above language suitable to "the improved manners of the present times." I hope he does not. He writes, he says in defence of the judgment of the *ablest* among the professors in college, and at the desire of a number of the Irish Students. For the sake of literature, and the honour of Irishmen, I trust he had the approbation of no man in the use of the language above quoted. I am inclined to think he wrote in a passion, and without a deliberate approbation of himself. It would be a large addition to the refinement of even this refined age, were the tongue and the pen for ever prohibited the use of such language. The orations of opponents and the publications of controversial writers would be much curtailed.

Since the writing of my letter, I have been favoured with a reading of the poem entitled "Patrick." Respecting this tale, the Irish Student concludes, that, I have either not seen the work which I yet endeavour to depreciate, or having seen it, I have not been able to detect any blemishes in it. That production is more than human in which there are no imperfections. The Student does not say it is without faults: but from my alleged disposition infers an incapacity of discerning them. He seems to hint it is without blemishes, at least in its plan, language, and ideas. He calls it an excellent, beautiful little poem, that will be read and admired for centuries. Depreciation is not more detrimental than exaggerated encomium. He that flatters an author beyond what he deserves, does him as much injury as the unjust critic who detracts from his real merits.

Influenced by no envy or prejudice against Mr M'Henry with whom I have not the least acquaintance, from a real regard to his success as an author and a poet, I take the liberty of making a few observations on "Patrick" in addition to the just critique of Amicus. This publication appears to me to have been rather unseasonable both as to time and place. The summer of ninety-eight has elapsed; better times have ensued: being an unhappy period, it would seem more prudent, and more congenial to the spirit of an Irishman to cast a veil over it, than by a tragical detail of our follies and our woes to revive, especially in another country, what is partly forgotten.

The concluding lines of Patrick's exclamation, commencing with

"Ah! no, I see the desolated farms,"

page 12th and 13th, display consider-

able poetic talent. They are musical and good, especially these four:

"No orchards smile with fruitful honours gay,
No cultur'd flowers the gardner's pride display;
No peasant whistles o'er the dewy vale,
No Maiden listens to her lover's tale."

But in this, in page 18th, and other parts of the poem, are not the misfortunes of these times exaggerated? Poetic license should not *here* admit of heightening the picture beyond what is true. The incidents are not remote, the poem is principally narrative, and Henry is introduced declaring,

"And truth alone shall dictate what I say"

The fruits of the ground were not destroyed; provision was plenty both in possession and in prospect: actual disturbance was limited to a few spots: trade and public credit continued to a remarkable extent during the very time of commotion. In some unavoidable instances the innocent may have suffered; but in general, punishment fell upon the head of the guilty. The attempts to rebel were defeated without much loss of blood. Justice and humanity were prevalent, even in the exercise of martial law amongst our deluded countrymen.

Some expressions in this poem seem to lean too much to the side of those who appeared in open rebellion. Let the following stanzas illustrate this remark:

"Not still to *justice* is success allied,
And fortune smiled upon the stronger side—
When heaven appeared to give the *righteous* o'er,
And seemed a while to rule the earth no more;
But his dread arm with vengeance yet shall come
And *tyrants* tremble as he writes their doom."

The wild extremes to which advocates for reform have run, the modern history of continental Europe, and especially of France, the miseries of anarchy, should excite every man to use his influence in promoting the peace of his country. Solomon's precept is a good one, "Fear the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.

Some lines of this production are prosaic, as,

"Forced from their ruined homes and friends to go—
As once by business far abroad compelled
With one companion home my way I held.'

while others display poetic beauty, as,

"We heard a voice which sang a tale of woes,
Wild as the rocks from whence its numbers rose:
We bent to listen—all my bosom glowed
While thus the strains in plaintive cadence flowed."

Mary's song, in page 24th, she being considered a maniac, may be naturally supposed to be incoherent; but there is no reason why its language should be rough, mean, or inharmonious.

On the verses,

"'Twas patriot warmth that *did* his breast excite,—
This house to youthful Henry *did* belong,
His powerful arm with vengeance *did* abound."

I would observe, in good modern poetry the auxiliary verb is not thus used, unless in the expression of admiration, or where a question is asked. The abreviations that's and ye'd are inelegant.

Perspicuity and simplicity are the chief recommendatory characteristics of this poem.

These are laudable qualities in every composition but especially so in a tale. A want of fire and spirit is its chief defect.

Viewing the entire execution of "Patrick," I presume the author should not be offended though he were ranked amongst the number of inferior poets, and allowed a little pre-eminence in that station; nor should his fellow Student deny my remarks the dignity of criticism, even though in comparing a Scott to the sun I had likened the Bard of Erin to a revolving planet.

Any recommendation from an opponent might be supposed to be almost useless. Were I to assume the air of a counsellor my advice to the Irish Student would be. Let your attempts at witticism be always natural The story of the cock is unworthy of reply; it is forced humour, and such will never pass for

wit among the discerning. Let your premises be always as extensive as your conclusions. Censure modestly and mildly. Never go about to secure the esteem or friendship of this man, by becoming the foe of that; nor seek to establish the reputation of one, by endeavouring to promote the ruin of another. Fulsome encomiums and ill natured depreciation are both extremes. Give every man fair play, and he will stand at that level in society to which his merits raise, or his demerits sink him.

Ballynahinch S. E.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

FEVER HOSPITAL AND HOUSE OF RECOVERY, CORK-STREET.

Dublin, 12th April, 1810.

AS it appears, by a reference to the registry of admissions, that many children belonging to different charity schools in Dublin, labouring under contagious fever, have been lately received into said hospital, the *managing committee* feel it incumbent on them, to recommend to the governors and governesses of these charities a more strict observance of personal cleanliness amongst the children, together with free ventilation, as well as frequent cleansing and white-washing of the rooms, used as schools and dormitories.

The committee also wish to impress on the minds of the upper classes of inhabitants in Dublin, the bad effects occasioned by the filthy and confined state in which a great majority of their servants are usually lodged, as to bedding, apartments, &c. &c. which in many instances have, to the knowledge of the committee, proved the means of exciting and keeping up *contagious fever.*

The committee avail themselves of this opportunity to congratulate the public on the success of an institution which has proved the happy means of giving a considerable check to the progress of *contagious fever,* and consequently of having improved the health of the inhabitants of this populous city, *as it is a fact which cannot be too generally known,* that since the opening of the hospital in 1804, the number of persons, for whom application has been made for admission has diminished, although at the commencement, and for some time thereafter, the district relieved, comprehended only about five parishes in the liberty, and neither servants nor persons affected with scarlet fever were received, whilst for upwards of a year past, the limits of admission have been extended to the entire of the city of Dublin, within the circular road, and servants as well as every other description of poor, labouring under contagious fever (scarlatina included) are now admissible:

In order to secure a continuance of these benefits, the committee annex the code of advice, which the porters attending the hospital-carriage leave at every house from whence a patient is removed, which they earnestly hope will be strictly followed by those persons to whom it is more immediately addressed, as well as by the inhabitants of the city of Dublin at large, and in a measure of this important nature, the committee confidently expect the co-operation and assistance of all humane and public spirited individuals.

By order,
William Richardson,
Register.

ADVICE.

Though you have sent your friend to the house of recovery, yet the infection may still remain in your rooms, and about your clothes; to remove it, you are advised to use without delay, the following means:

1st. Let all your doors and windows be immediately thrown open, and let them remain so for two hours.

2d. Let the house or room whence the patient is removed, be immediately cleansed; all dirty clothes, utensils, &c. should be immersed in cold water; the bed clothes, after being first steeped in cold water, should be wrung out, and washed in warm water and soap.

3d. Let the clothes you wear be steeped in cold water, and afterwards washed; and let every box, chest, drawer, &c. in the infectious house be emptied and cleansed.

4th. If you lie on straw beds, let the straw be immediately burned, and fresh straw provided, and let the ticken be steeped in cold water.